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# Multi-Family Subsurface Soil Absorption Decentralized Cluster Systems

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Water Protection Program fact sheet

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One alternative to individual residential on-site wastewater systems is to use a multi-family subsurface soil absorption decentralized cluster system. This fact sheet addresses some of the basic questions related to multi-family complexes, motels, hotels, apartments, trailer parks, RV parks, resorts and individual residences that propose to discharge into subsurface soil absorption cluster systems.

Jurisdictional responsibility is outlined in the Residential Housing Rule (10 CSR 20-6.030, *Disposal of Wastewater in Residential Housing Developments*).

Section (1)(A) (5) defines a lot as "Any portion, piece, division, unit or undivided interest in real estate, if the interest includes the right to the exclusive use of a specific portion of real estate, whether for a specific term or in perpetuity."

Section (6)(A) of the rule states: "Residential housing developments that propose to build multiple family housing units (duplexes, quadplexes, etc.) shall submit an engineers report in accordance with 10 CSR 20-8.020 Design of Small Sewage Works. Each housing unit shall be considered equal to a single family residence for the purposes of compliance with this rule."

## Frequently Asked Questions

Here are answers to some frequently asked questions regarding department approval of proposed multi-family subsurface soil absorption decentralized cluster systems.

**If an individual (developer) proposes a multi-family complex, motel, hotel or resort with four buildings, each with two units for a total of eight, does it require Department of Natural Resources approval?**

Yes. When a proposed development proposes seven or more units, it requires approval from the department. Once that approval has been given, the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) or local administrative authority reviews and approves the design of the system, and issues the construction permit.

**If an individual (developer) proposes a multi-family complex, motel, hotel or resort with three buildings, each with two units, for a total of six units, does it require Department of Natural Resources approval?**

No. A development with fewer than seven units does not require department approval. However, it still requires the design of the system to be reviewed and approved by the DHSS or local administrative authorities.



**If an existing multi-family complex, motel, hotel or resort wants to expand, and the proposed expansion includes four additional units along with a single-family residence, does it require Department of Natural Resources approval?**

Yes. If the existing facilities are already using on-site wastewater disposal, any expansion of three or more units, to a total number of seven units or more, requires department approval. After department approval, the DHSS or the local administrative authorities, after reviewing and approving the design of the system, would issue the construction permit.

The above scenarios apply to apartments, trailer parks, RV parks and individual residences that discharge into subsurface soil absorption decentralized cluster system, in situations where the estimated design flow is less than or equal to 3,000 gallons per day (GPD) for each subsurface disposal area.

If there is more than one subsurface soil disposal area, then it should be demonstrated in the engineer's report that the geology, soils and landscapes will allow the disposal areas to independently treat and control the effluent. If this cannot be demonstrated, and the combined flows are greater than 3,000 gallons per day, the system may be required to obtain a construction and operating permit from the Department of Natural Resources.

Only centralized sewage collection and treatment systems will be acceptable in residential housing developments that propose lots smaller than 40,000 square feet (0.92 acres). Construction and operating permits for central sewage collection and treatment systems are required from the Department of Natural Resources' regional offices.

If a system discharges less than or equal to 3,000 GPD of domestic wastewater into a subsurface soil absorption cluster system, the department requires, at minimum, an engineer's report following the criteria set forth in the Residential Housing Rule. If the department approves the engineer's report, then the DHSS or local administrative authority issues the construction permit upon review and approval of the design of the system. It should also be noted that any flow of domestic wastewater greater than 3,000 GPD requires Department of Natural Resources construction and operating permits.

**For more information about multi-family subsurface soil absorption systems or the Residential Housing Rule, please contact the department at**

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